

### UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

## REGION II 290 BROADWAY NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10007-1866

September 30, 2013

### VIA REGULAR MAIL AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

(See Attachment 1 - List of Addressees)

Re: Gowanus Canal Superfund Site, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York

Notice of Potential Liabilityunder 42 U.S.C. § 9607(a) to Two Parties Not Previously Noticed

Demand for Past Response Costs Pursuant to Section 107(a) of CERCLA, 42 U.S.C. § 9607(a)

Commencement of Negotiations for Remedial Design

#### Dear Sirs and Madams:

As you know, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") is charged with responding to the release or threatened release of hazardous substances, pollutants and contaminants into the environment and with enforcement responsibilities under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, as amended ("CERCLA"), 42 U.S.C. Sections 9601-9675, (also known as the "Superfund" law). More information about CERCLA, including a copy of the Superfund law, may be found at <a href="https://www.epa.gov/superfund">www.epa.gov/superfund</a>.

EPA has documented the release and threatened release of hazardous substances into the environment at the Gowanus Canal Superfund Site (the "Site"), located in Brooklyn, Kings County, New York. In March 2010, the Gowanus Canal was added to the National Priorities List ("NPL") established pursuant to Section 105 of CERCLA, 42 U.S.C. Section 9605. In response to the release and threatened release of hazardous substances into the environment at the Site, EPA has spent public funds and anticipates spending additional public funds.

EPA began a remedial investigation/feasibility study ("RI/FS") at the Site in 2009. In April 2010, EPA entered into separate administrative consent orders with New York City ("NYC") and National Grid to perform work in support of EPA's RI/FS. An RI report was completed by EPA in January 2011 and an FS report was completed in December 2011. An FS addendum report was completed in December 2012.

Sampling results from the RI/FS document the presence of hazardous substances in groundwater, soil, and Canal sediments at the Site. These include polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons ("PAHs"),

polychlorinated biphenyls ("PCBs"), pesticides (such as methoxychlor and DDT), metals (such as barium, cadmium, copper, lead, mercury, nickel and silver), and volatile organic compounds (such as benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene). The contamination extends the entire length of the Canal

Based on the results of the RI/FS, chemical contamination in the Canal sediments presents an unacceptable ecological and human health risk, primarily due to exposure to PAHs, PCBs, and metals (barium, cadmium, copper, lead, mercury, nickel and silver). Additional information about the Canal, including the RI/FS reports, can be found on EPA Region 2's website at <a href="https://www.epa.gov/region02/superfund/npl/gowanus/">www.epa.gov/region02/superfund/npl/gowanus/</a>.

The Gowanus Canal is a brackish, tidal arm of the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary, extending for approximately 1.8 miles through Brooklyn. The approximately 100-foot-wide Canal runs southwest from Butler Street to Gowanus Bay and Upper New York Bay. The adjacent waterfront is primarily commercial and industrial, currently consisting of concrete plants, warehouses, and parking lots, and the Site is near several residential neighborhoods.

The Canal was constructed by bulkheading and dredging a tidal creek and wetland. After its completion in the 1860s, the Canal quickly became one of the nation's busiest industrial waterways, home to heavy industry including gas works (*i.e.*, manufactured gas plants), coal yards, cement makers, soap makers, tanneries, paint and ink factories, machine shops, chemical plants and oil refineries. The Canal was used as a repository for untreated industrial wastes, raw sewage, and runoff for decades, causing it to become one of New York's most polluted waterways. Although much of the industrial activity along the Canal has ceased, high contaminant levels remain in the groundwater and Canal sediments. Despite the ongoing pollution problems, the Canal is currently used by some for recreational purposes, such as canoeing and diving, while others catch fish for consumption. Significant redevelopment is occurring and planned along the Canal.

EPA released a Proposed Plan for cleanup of the Site on December 27, 2012 and accepted comments for 120 days. On September 27, 2013, EPA issued Record of Decision ("ROD") for the Site which mirrors the Proposed Plan and includes the following response actions: 1) dredging of the entire column of hazardous substance-contaminated sediments which have accumulated above the native sediments in the upper and mid-reaches of the Canal (referred to as "soft sediments"); 2) in-situ stabilization of those native sediments in select areas in the upper and mid-reaches of the Canal contaminated with high levels of nonaqueous phase liquid ("NAPL"); 3) construction of a multilayered cap in the upper and mid-reaches of the Canal to isolate and prevent the migration of PAHs and residual NAPL from native sediments; 4) dredging of the entire soft sediment column in the lower reach of the Canal; 5) construction of a multilayer cap to isolate and prevent the migration of PAHs from native sediments in the lower reach of the Canal; 6) off-Site treatment of the NAPL-impacted sediments dredged from the upper and mid-reaches of the Canal with thermal desorption, followed by beneficial reuse off-Site (e.g., landfill daily cover) if possible; 7) off-Site stabilization of the less contaminated

sediments dredged from the lower reach of the Canal and the sediments in the other reaches not impacted by NAPL, followed by beneficial reuse off-Site; 8) excavation and restoration of approximately 475 feet of the filled-in former 1st Street turning basin; 9) excavation and restoration of the portion of the 5th Street turning basin beginning underneath the 3th Avenue bridge and extending approximately 25 feet to the east and the installation of a barrier or interception system at the eastern boundary of the excavation; 10) implementation of institutional controls incorporating the existing fish consumption advisories (modified, as needed), as well as other controls to protect the integrity of the cap; 11) periodic maintenance of the cap and long-term monitoring to insure that the remedy continues to function effectively; and 12) combined sewer overflow ("CSO") controls to significantly reduce overall contaminated solid discharges to the Canal, which shall include: a) construction of in-line sewage/stormwater retention tanks to retain stormwater which currently discharges through outfalls RH-034 and OH-007; and b) implementation of appropriate engineering controls to ensure that hazardous substances and solids from separated stormwater, including from future upland development projects, are not discharged to the Canal.

The documents that form the basis for EPA's selected remedy are contained in the administrative record, which is maintained at EPA's offices in New York City, and at the following repositories located near the Site:

Carroll Gardens Library 396 Clinton St. Brooklyn, NY 11231 (718) 596-6972 Joseph Miccio Community Center 110 West 9th St Brooklyn NY 11231 (718) 453-1296

You may inspect copies of the administrative record during regular business hours at EPA's offices in New York City or at the local administrative record repositories identified above. (The administrative record files in the local repositories are in the process of being updated; we expect this process to be completed shortly.) Please contact Christos Tsiamis, the Remedial Project Manager for the Site, at (212) 637-4257, if you wish to arrange an appointment to inspect the administrative record at EPA's New York office.

#### NOTICE OF POTENTIAL LIABILITY

Under CERCLA and other laws, responsible parties may be held liable for monies expended by the federal government in taking response actions at and around sites where hazardous substances have been released, including investigative, planning, removal, remedial, and enforcement actions. Responsible parties also may be subject to orders requiring them to take response actions themselves. Responsible parties under CERCLA include current owners or operators of a facility, past owners or operators of a facility at the time of disposal of hazardous substances, and persons who arranged for the treatment or disposal of hazardous substances which came to be located at a facility. EPA has previously notified a number of parties of their potential liability at the Site. Since those notifications, EPA has evaluated information obtained

in connection with the Site about two additional parties, including the responses of those parties to EPA Requests for Information pursuant to Section 104(e) of CERCLA, 42 U.S.C. Section 9604(e).

By this letter, EPA notifies the Brooklyn Improvement Co. and Puget Sound Commerce Center, Inc. that they are potentially responsible parties ("PRPs") with respect to the Site pursuant to Section 107(a) of CERCLA, 42 U.S.C. Section 9607(a).

# DEMAND FOR PAST RESPONSE COSTS

As noted above, EPA has spent public funds and anticipates spending additional public funds in connection with CERCLA response actions undertaken by the Agency in response to the release and threatened release of hazardous substances at the Site. EPA has paid approximately \$15,192,620.52 in response costs with respect to the Site through July 31, 2013. These costs were incurred by EPA, for a variety of activities in connection with the RI/FS and remedy selection process, including but not limited to, sampling and analysis, technical consultants, payroll, enforcement, public outreach and records management. Enclosed with this letter you will find a printout from EPA's financial management system, which breaks down the different categories of costs that have been paid by EPA with respect to the Site. Please note that these costs do not include certain Site response costs which are still being compiled, including costs of the Department of Justice ("USDOJ") and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Control on behalf of EPA. The costs paid by EPA with respect to the Site are charged to the Hazardous Substances Superfund, established pursuant to 26 U.S.C. § 9507 and administered by EPA. A narrative summary of these costs will be provided under separate cover in the near future.

In September 2010, EPA entered into a judicial bankruptcy consent decree with Chemtura Corp. under which Chemtura paid EPA \$3.9 million to resolve its liability with respect to the Site. In August 2013, National Grid reimbursed EPA \$122,089.64 for EPA oversight of National Grid's work under the administrative consent order noted above. In July 2013, EPA billed NYC for \$55,425.88 in oversight costs under its administrative consent order, payment of which is in process. After deducting these amounts from the total past response costs, the amount of EPA's unreimbursed past costs for the Site are \$11,115,105.00.

As a PRP, you are potentially liable, jointly and severally, for EPA's unreimbursed past response costs. In accordance with Section 107(a) of CERCLA, 42 U.S.C. § 9607(a), demand is hereby made for \$11,115,105.00, plus any and all interest recoverable under Section 107 of CERCLA, 42 U.S.C. § 9607. Pursuant to Section 107(a) of CERCLA, 42 U.S.C. § 9607(a), interest on \$11,115,105.00 will accrue from the date of this letter.

# NOTICE OF REMEDIAL DESIGN ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NEGOTIATIONS

By this letter, EPA wishes to determine whether you, either individually or collectively, will voluntarily perform the remedial design ("RD") for the remedy selected in the ROD.

Attached is a draft RD Administrative Order and Settlement Agreement ("RD Agreement") which provides for the performance of the RD, the partial reimbursement of EPA's past response costs, and the reimbursement of EPA's future RD oversight costs.

This notice is not being given in accordance with the "special notice" procedures of Section 122(e) of CERCLA, 42 U.S.C. § 9622(e). Use of those procedures here and the moratorium that accompanies them would be inappropriate since they would not expedite the Remedial Action ("RA"). EPA wishes to promptly secure a commitment to perform the RD for the Site so as to ensure commencement of RD field work in early 2014, and thus the timely implementation of the RA. As you are aware, in March 2012, EPA convened a meeting of the then-noticed PRPs in order to assist them in beginning the process of formulating an equitable allocation of liability among the parties. Having begun the process in March 2012, EPA believes that the moratorium is not necessary or appropriate. Consequently, EPA will seek signature of the enclosed RD Agreement by December 13, 2013.

EPA recognizes that the PRPs have not yet reached a final equitable allocation of responsibility among themselves and that such an allocation is likely to be finalized as part of the final negotiations for RA consent decree ("CD") at this Site. For this reason, EPA is willing, for settlement purposes only and conditioned on timely execution of the RD Agreement, to accept \$5,000,000.00 in partial payment of its past costs, with a reservation as to the remaining unreimbursed costs.

Following conclusion of RD negotiations, EPA plans to promptly begin negotiation of the RA CD under which the PRPs would implement EPA's selected remedy for the Site. The RA CD would also provide for the reimbursement of balance of EPA's pre-July 31, 2013 costs, as well as all response costs paid by EPA with respect to the Site after July 31, 2013, and interest.

### RESPONSE TO EPA'S NOTICE AND DEMAND

Within twenty-one (21) days from the date of this letter, please advise EPA whether you are willing to enter into the RD Agreement in substantially the same form as enclosed. We have tentatively scheduled a meeting with all PRPs for November 7, 2013 at 11 AM in EPA's offices in New York. In your response, please notify EPA as to whether you or your representative will attend the meeting. We urge you and the other PRPs to coordinate among yourselves before the meeting in order to facilitate discussion of the enclosed documents with EPA.

Please send you notice to:

Brian Carr
Assistant Regional Counsel
New York/Caribbean Superfund Branch
Office of Regional Counsel
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region II

# 290 Broadway, 17th Floor New York, NY 10007-1866 carr.brian@epa.gov

with a copy to:

Christos Tsiamis
Remedial Project Manager
New York Remediation Branch
Emergency and Remedial Response Division
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region II
290 Broadway, 20th Floor
New York, NY 10007-1866
tsiamis.christos@epa.gov

Please be aware that should no PRP volunteer to perform the RD for the Site, EPA will proceed with its enforcement options, which may include performing the work itself (the cost of which you may be held liable for under Section 107(a) of CERCLA) and/or requiring one or more PRPs to perform the RD pursuant to Section 106(a) of CERCLA. If some but not all PRPs agree to perform the RD, EPA may also require any non-settling PRPs to cooperate and coordinate with the performing PRPs pursuant to Section 106(a) of CERCLA.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, you may contact Mr. Carr via email at carr.brian@epa.gov or by phone at (212) 637-3170.

We appreciate and look forward to your prompt response to this letter.

Sincerely yours,

Nicoletta Diforte

Senior Enforcement Policy Advisor

Emergency and Remedial Response Division

Attachment 1 - List of Addressees

Attachment 2 - Counsel of Record for Addressees

**Enclosures: Cost Summary** 

Draft RD Agreement and Statement of Work

(available at: www.epa.gov/region02/superfund/npl/gowanus/additionaldocs.html)

cc: Peter Flynn, USDOJ
Deborah Zwany, USDOJ
Mark Barash, Esq., USDOI
Ken Finkelstein, NOAA
Robert W. Schick, P.E., NYSDEC
George Heitzman, NYSDEC

# Attachment 1 - List of Addressees to Gowanus Canal RD Notice and Demand Letter

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  Mid-Atlantic Office of Command
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- Honeywell International Inc.
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- 8. Kraft Foods Global, Inc.
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- 9. Stauffer Management Co., LLC
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- MCIZ Corp., Fifteen Second Avenue LLC, 36-2nd-J Corp., and 107 Sixth Street LLC Attn.: Jacob Marmurstein 5307 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11204

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- 14. ConocoPhillips Co.
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- 15. ExxonMobil Oil Corp.
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- Citigroup, Inc./MRC Holdings, Inc.
   Attn: Preston Turner
   Associate General Counsel
   Citi Litigation Service Center
   300 St. Paul Place, BSP17D
   Baltimore, MD 21202
- 17. NL Industries, Inc.
  Attn: Courtney J. Riley
  Executive Director, Environmental
  Management
  Three Lincoln Centre.
  5430 LBJ Freeway, Suite 1700
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- 18. Patterson Fuel Oil Company, Inc.
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- 19. The Union Oil Company of
  California (c/o Chevron U.S.A. Inc.,
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- 20. Verizon New York Inc.
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- 21. SPX Corporation
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- 22. U.S. Postal Service
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  Senior Litigation Counsel
  4200 Wake Forest Rd.
  Raleigh, NC 27668-9000
  gary.w.bigelow@usps.gov
- 23. U.S. General Services
  Administration
  Attn: Carol Schafer
  Senior Assistant General Counsel
  Real Property Division
  Office of the General Counsel
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- 24. Dun & Bradstreet, Inc. Attn: Louis Sapirman Vice President/Associate General Counsel 103 JFK Parkway Short Hills, NJ 07054
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- 28. Hauck Manufacturing, Inc.
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- 29. CBS Corporation
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- 30. Beam Inc.
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- 31. TDA Industries, Inc. Attn: Douglas P. Fields Chief Executive Officer 122 E 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, Suite 1618 New York, NY 10168
- Northeastern Plastics, Inc. Attn: Daniel Dror Chief Executive Officer 601 Cien Street, Suite 235 Kemah, TX 77565
- 33. U.S. Maritime Administration
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- 34. Brooklyn Improvement Co.
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- 35. Puget Sound Commerce Center, Inc. Attn: Frank Foti Chief Executive Officer 1801 16<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW Seattle, WA 98134

### Attachment 2 - List of Counsel of Record

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